



## Best Practice Initiative

from the Assistant Secretary for Health  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



### **Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative Improves Breastfeeding Initiation Rates in U.S. Hospital Setting**

#### ***Project Accomplishments***

In 1999, Boston Medical Center (BMC) became the 22<sup>nd</sup> hospital in the United States to achieve Baby-Friendly status, fully implementing the *Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative- USA (BFHI), Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*. BMC increased their breastfeeding rates by more than 17 percent. This Baby-Friendly designation has proven to be an effective strategy to increase breastfeeding initiation rates in U.S. hospital settings.

#### ***Background***

In 1992, the *World Health Organization (WHO)* and the *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)* launched the *BFHI* in an effort to transform practices in maternity hospitals worldwide. It facilitates breastfeeding and ensures that women in maternity care have full information and support to breastfeed their infants in an environment free of commercial influences. Despite the many benefits of breastfeeding, the rates of breastfeeding in the United States are low, especially at six months postpartum. In 1998, only 29 percent of all U.S. mothers breastfed their infants at six months. Only 19 percent of all African-American mothers breastfed at six months. As a result, U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher identified breastfeeding as a national health priority and released the strategic *Health and Human Services, Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding* in October 2000. It recommended that infants should be exclusively breastfed during the first six months of life, and that breastfeeding should continue through the first year of life.

Over 16,000 hospitals and birth centers in more than 125 countries have been assessed and recognized as "Baby Friendly" under the initiative. The program at the BMC illustrates the initiative's general approach.

## ***Goals***

The goal of the project was to prove that successful implementation of Baby-Friendly policies is associated with significant increases in breastfeeding initiation rates. The overall goal of the *BFHI* is to recognize hospitals and maternity centers that demonstrate their commitment to providing an optimal environment for breastfeeding mothers by fulfilling the standards outlined in the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*, as laid out by *WHO* and *UNICEF* in 1989, then reconfirmed in 1990.

## ***Core Components***

The *WHO* and *UNICEF* recommend that the following *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding* be implemented in every facility providing maternity services and care for newborn infants:

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy that is routinely communicated to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in skills necessary to implement this policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within a half-hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed, and how to maintain lactation even if they should be separated from their infants.
6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breastmilk, unless *medically* indicated.
7. Practice rooming-in: allow mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.
9. Give no artificial teats or pacifiers (also called dummies or soothers) to breastfeeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.

## ***Results***

Maternal and infant demographics of BMC for 1995, 1998, and 1999 were comparable. The breastfeeding initiation rate increased from 58 percent (1995) to 86.5 percent (1999). Infants exclusively breastfed increased from 5.5 percent (1995) to 28.5 percent (1998) to 33.5 percent (1999). Initiation rates increased among U.S. African-American mothers in the population from 34 percent (1995) to 64 percent (1998) to 74 percent (1999).

### ***Further Information***

For more information on the BMC, Baby-Friendly Initiative contact:

Barbara L. Philipp, MD, IBCLC or Anne Merewood, MA, IBCLC  
The Breastfeeding Center  
ACC 5  
Boston Medical Center  
850 Harrison Avenue  
Boston, MA 02118  
Telephone: (617) 414-6455  
E-mail: [anne.merewood@bmc.org](mailto:anne.merewood@bmc.org)  
Web-site: <http://www.bostonchildhealth.org/special/Breastfeeding/overview.html>

For further information on how to become a Baby Friendly Hospital-USA contact:

Baby-Friendly USA  
8 Jan Sebastian Way #13  
Sandwich, MA 02563  
Phone: (508) 888-8092  
Fax: (508) 888-8050  
E-mail: [info@babyfriendlyusa.org](mailto:info@babyfriendlyusa.org)  
Web-site: <http://www.babyfriendly.us>

For further information about the WHO/UNICEF Baby Friendly Hospital initiative, visit the Web site at <http://www.unicef.org/bfhi>

### ***Relevant Reports***

1. Barbara L. Philipp, Anne Merewood, Lisa W. Miller, Neetu Chawla, Melissa M. Murphy-Smith, Jenifer S. Gomes, Sabrina Cimo, and John T. Cook. **Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative Improves Breastfeeding Initiation Rates in a US Hospital Setting.** Pediatrics 2001 108: 677-681.
2. WHO/UNICEF. (1990) The Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding. Florence, Italy. August 1, 1990.
3. World Health Organization. (1989) Protecting, Promoting and Supporting Breastfeeding: The special role of maternity services: A Joint WHO/UNICEF Statement.
4. Armstrong, Helen. (1999) "UNICEF: Lessons Learned from the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative" IN: Women Friendly Health Services - Experiences in Maternal Care: A Report of a WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Workshop. Mexico City. January 26-28, 1999.
5. UNICEF. (1992) "The Global Criteria for the WHO/UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative." New York.

***Topic Related URL's***

<http://www.4woman.gov/Breastfeeding/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/compand-babyfriendly.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/compand-babyfriendlywho.htm#tensteps>

<http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/policy-innocenti.htm>

<http://www.unicef.org/wsc/>

<http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/baby.htm#10>

<http://www.who.int/dsa/cat98/mat8.htm>

<http://www.unicef.org/programme/health/document/mexeng.pdf>